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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

State Dept. review completed

ARMY review(s) completed.

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HIGHLIGHTS

Local elections in South Vietnam proceeded smoothly for the second consecutive Sunday. On the national level, Premier Ky is apparently cooperating actively with the largest bloc in the Constituent Assembly in an effort to further his presidential candidacy. US officials feel that his chances for becoming the military's nominee remain slightly better than those of Chief of State Thieu. No major ground actions were reported in South Vietnam over the weekend, although Communist forces did carry out a mortar attack on the headquarters of the US 1st Air Cavalry Division.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Ground action in South Vietnam on 8 and 9 April was highlighted by a mortar attack on the 400 helicopters and observation planes stationed at the base camp of the 1st Air Cavalry Division at An Khe (Para. 1). Units of the US 9th Infantry Division made contact with an estimated VC battalion 15 miles southwest of Saigon on 9 April and may have surrounded the enemy force (Para. 2). B-52 raids over the weekend were concentrated on Communist infiltration routes and logistic areas in Laos and South Vietnam's I Corps (Para. 3).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
Local elections for village councils on 9 April proceeded smoothly for the second successive Sunday. There was a high voter turnout and minimal Viet Cong interference (Para. 1). The US Embassy continues to believe that Premier Ky's chances for becoming the military's presidential nominee are slightly better than those of Chief of State Thieu, although it is uncertain when he might be named (Para. 2).

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[REDACTED] During the past week, at least eight Constituent Assembly deputies have received threatening letters. There is suspicion in some quarters that Police Director Loan is the instigator (Paras. 5-7).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:
There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

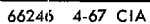
V. Communist Political Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. A Communist force of unknown size attacked the base camp of the US 1st Air Cavalry Division near An Khe on 9 April killing nine troopers and wounding 17 others. The attack opened at night with a mortar barrage directed at the camp airfield where more than 400 helicopters and observation aircraft are stationed. Countermortar radar located the enemy positions and aerial rocket fire suppressed the barrage within eight minutes, and only 12 helicopters were damaged. Most of the US casualties occurred in a subsequent brief firefight during an enemy attack on one of the camp's perimeter security posts.

2. Preliminary reports from MACV on 9 April indicated that elements of the US 9th Infantry Division were heavily engaged with an estimated Communist battalion approximately 15 miles southwest of Saigon. The US units, searching parts of Long An Province as part of Operation ENTERPRISE, are believed to have surrounded the enemy force, and additional friendly troops have been called in. Initial casualty reporting lists 16 US wounded and 40 Communists dead. The enemy troops, wearing steel helmets and khaki uniforms, have been tentatively identified by a captured Viet Cong as members of the 211th VC battalion.

3. B-52 raids over the weekend were concentrated on Communist base camps and supply routes in Laos and South Vietnam's northern provinces. Twenty-seven B-52s hit storage areas and infiltration routes north and south of the 17th parallel in Laos. Twenty-one bombers carried out five attacks on several enemy positions approximately 10 and 25 miles west-southwest of Hue.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Local elections for some 252 village councils on 9 April proceeded smoothly for the second successive Sunday, with voter turnout remaining high and few Viet Cong counter-election incidents reported. Returns thus far indicate that the proportion of eligible voters casting ballots on 9 April will probably be somewhat higher than the 80.5 percent turnout on 2 April. The few major election incidents occurred prior to 9 April, but included the assassination of one ethnic Cambodian candidate in Vinh Binh Province. Although Viet Cong military action was widespread near Quang Tri city last week, there were no reports of voter harassment in that area on election day.

Thieu-Ky Presidential Candidacies Remain Unresolved

2. [REDACTED]

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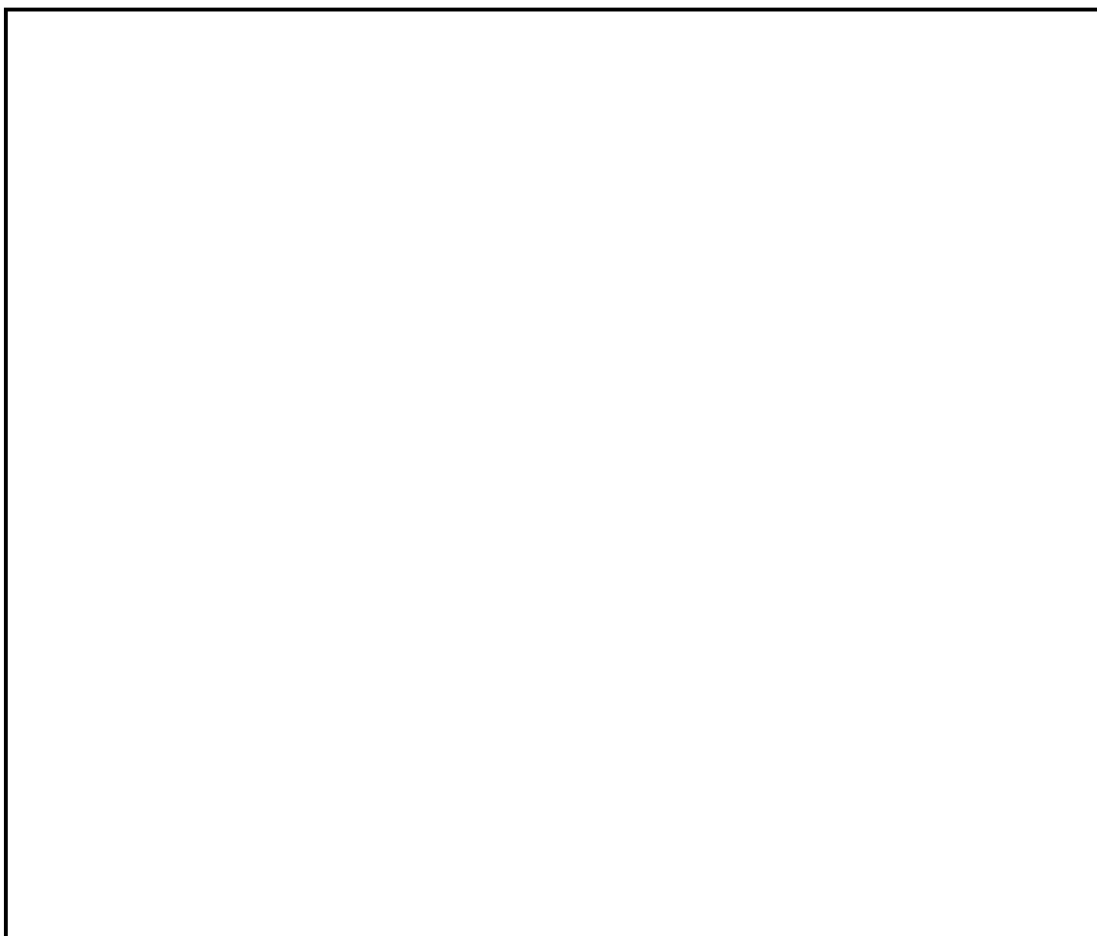
[REDACTED] the US Embassy continues to believe that Ky's prospects for becoming the military nominee are slightly better than those of General Thieu, and that their current competition will most likely be resolved by a private arrangement between the two men. In view of various conflicting reports, however, the embassy has commented that the timing of the decision remains very much in doubt, but that pressures are mounting and that it will likely occur within the next few weeks, and perhaps within the next few days.

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Harassment of Constituent Assembly Members

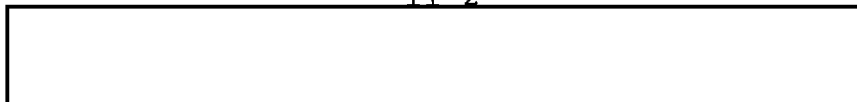
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5. [redacted] since 3 April at least eight Constituent Assembly deputies have received threatening letters, four of which were accompanied by boxes containing hand grenades. The letters were generally critical of the constitution, and warned the assemblymen that unless they changed their "opportunistic ways" they would face strong measures.

6. The source of these threats remains unknown, although a police investigation is reportedly under way. The local Vietnamese press has avoided labeling these incidents as examples of Viet Cong terrorism. There has been some speculation in Saigon that they are either the result of pre-election infighting between nationalist political factions or an attempt by the military to keep civilian politicians off balance.

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7. The latter theme was discussed by Lt. Colonel Pham Van Loi, who is secretary general of the Peoples Armed Forces Advisory Council and also close to Premier Ky, in a conversation with a US Embassy officer on 7 April. Loi said that there is widespread belief that Police Director Loan is involved in the affair, because of Loan's reputation for mounting similar operations in the past and his well-known critical attitude toward the constitution and the Constituent Assembly. Loi said that such speculation about Loan could harm Premier Ky's reputation and his presidential prospects and that he planned to talk soon to both Ky and Loan to express his concern.

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